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SUBJECT: KITCHEN GARDENS INCREASE FOOD SECURITY OF
CONGOLESE REFUGEES

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: American Refugee Committee (ARC) has implemented a project to improve food production by and for vulnerable families in the Kiziba refugee camp in western Rwanda, using grant funds from the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration's 2009 Julia Taft Fund for Refugees. On November 17, Emboffs visited the camp to view the project, which appears set to achieve good results. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) ARC received a grant of approximately \$4,500 from PRM's 2009 Julia Taft Fund for Refugees, formerly "The Ambassador's Fund," to improve food production in the Kiziba refugee camp in western Rwanda. (Note: The Fund is meant to cover a one-time, low-cost gap in refugee protection and assistance and not a long-term program. End Note.) Emboffs visited the camp November 17 to view the project. Kiziba camp is well-established, with approximately 18,000 Congolese refugees, many of whom have been in the camp for over ten years. Lack of space and available land limit the possibilities for large-scale agriculture and animal rearing. Although ARC does not implement the health services in Kiziba camp, a recent survey showed high rates of malnutrition and stunting, prompting it to apply for a grant through the Taft Fund.

¶3. (U) The objectives of the project were to increase food production through kitchen gardens and small animal rearing, reduce negative coping mechanisms such as vandalism and selling of food rations, and increase the self-esteem of vulnerable refugees. The grant provided initial agricultural and animal rearing inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, tools, and baby chickens and rabbits. Additionally, ARC used grant money to construct poultry and rabbit houses and construct wire fences around kitchen gardens. ARC organized the beneficiaries into small income generating groups and divided available land into smaller plots for each group. (Note: Groups planted kitchen gardens on land that was formerly used for latrines after agricultural specialists deemed it safe. End Note.) Each garden group has one representative in the small animal rearing cooperative.

¶4. (U) The project provides direct benefits to 327 refugees, and indirect benefits to an additional 1,308 family members. Each group is responsible for the care, maintenance, and security of the gardens and animal houses. Groups plan to consume some of the crops and animal products and sell any surplus to other refugees in the camp or the surrounding local population. Because ARC has just finished implementing the project, it is not yet possible to gauge its impact on nutrition or increased food production; however, the gardens and animal houses appeared well-constructed and productive. One beneficiary already eats and sells eggs from the animal rearing project, improving both her and her family's nutritional status and increasing her income.

¶5. (U) COMMENT: As in Rwanda's other two refugee camps, refugees in Kiziba expressed a desire to return to eastern Congo, but not until there is peace and security. Projects like this provide immediate benefits such as increased income and improved nutrition, and also provide refugees with skills they will be able to use once they return to Congo.

Additionally, employing men and women in productive work helps address the problem of domestic violence, which is exacerbated by men lacking meaningful employment. END

COMMENT.

SYMINGTON